

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HEREWITH FULL TEXT WASHINGTON STAR EDITORIAL, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, TITLED "SENTINELS--OR HOSTAGES?"

2. THE FRAGILITY OF ANY MIDDLE EAST ACCORD BROKERED BY DR. HENRY KISSINGER THIS WEEK IS ALL TOO PALPABLE, ON ALMOST ANY LINE OF REASONING. THAT THE ISRAELIS WANT ITS TERMS TO BE TRUMPETED TO THE WORLD, WHILE THE EGYPTIANS PREFER SILENCE AND SIGN LANGUAGE, IS ONE TROUBLING FACT.

3. ANOTHER, AND MORE TROUBLING FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, IS THAT SEVERAL U.S. SENATORS WHOSE ASSENT IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ARRANGEMENT ARE DISTURBED, AS WE ARE, BY THE PROPOSAL TO STATION AMERICAN "VOLUNTEERS" IN THE SINAI MOUNTAIN PASSES, WHERE THEY WOULD MONITOR FORCE LEVELS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE LINES.

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4. SEN. HENRY JACKSON HAS "RESERVATIONS." SEN. MIKE MANSFIELD ADMITTED, IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF AMERICANS AS SENTINELS EVOKEs, FOR HIM, UNPLEASANT MEMORIES OF THE ROAD TO VIETNAM.

5. CONSIDERING THE ENORMOUS STAKES, AND CONSIDERING THAT NO PEACE ARRANGEMENT IS LIKELY TO BE RISKLESS, NO SENATOR COULD HUNGER FOR THE ROLE OF A HENRY CABOT LODGE SR. HENCE, THE NATURE OF THIS AMERICAN "COMMITMENT" WILL HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED VERY CAREFULLY TO CONGRESS BEFORE THE CHECK NEGOTIATED BY DR. KISSINGER THIS WEEK CAN BE CASHED OR EVEN COUNTERSIGNED. CONGRESS WILL WANT TO ASSURE ITSELF THAT THE USE OF AMERICANS TO MAN ELECTRONIC SENSOR EQUIPMENT IN THE SINAI IS NOT, IN ALL BUT NAME, A BACKDOOR VERSION OF THOSE TRICKY AMERICAN "GUARANTEES" OFTEN MENTIONED BUT NEVER REALLY DEFINED IN TALK OF MID-EAST SETTLEMENTS.

6. THE USEFULNESS OF SUCH GUARANTEES CANNOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND SIMPLY BECAUSE OTHER SUCH COMMITMENTS, OF INFINITELY LESS IMPORTANCE, HAVE GONE SOUR. IN A NOTABLE FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARTICLE LAST JANUARY, PROF. RICHARD ULLMANN OF PRINCETON MADE AN IMPRESSIVE CASE THAT SINCE THE UNITED STATES HAS, AND IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO HAVE, AN IMPLICIT COMMITMENT TO THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL, THERE ARE ON BALANCE FEWER DANGERS IN OUTRIGHT DECLARATION OF THAT COMMITMENT THAN IN AMBIGUITY.

7. "IF THERE EVER WERE A POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH CRIED OUT FOR MEASURES TO REDUCE AMBIGUITY," PROFESSOR ULLMANN WROTE, "IT IS THE PRESENT STAGE OF CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE RELATIVELY AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF THE PRESENT AMERICAN COMMITMENT ENCOURAGES THE PALESTINIANS ALONG THE ROAD OF IRREDENTISM...IT INDUCES ISRAELI MILITARY LEADERS AND POLITICIANS ALIKE TO THINK IN TERMS OF WORST-CASE SCENARIOS, AND THEREFORE NOT TO MAKE THE SORT OF TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS WHICH WILL BE SO VITALLY NECESSARY IF A GENUINE END TO HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS EVER TO COME..."

8. THAT IS A POWERFUL LINE OF REASONING. AND IT MAY
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ULTIMATELY COMMEND ITSELF AS THE MOST SENSIBLE FOUNDATION FOR A DECLARATION OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT. BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES TO BEAR IN MIND. TO TALK OF ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL IS NOT TO SPEAK OF PLACING AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN THE SINAI. WHAT BOthers US MOST ABOUT THE REPORTED TERMS UNDER NEGOTIATION THIS WEEK IS THAT CONGRESS MAY FIND ITSELF, AGAIN, IN THE POSITION OF ENDORSING STEPS SHORT OF A POLICY THAT ACTUALLY HAVE THE FORCE AND EFFECT OF A POLICY.

9. CERTAINLY IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE WHY AMERICANS THEMSELVES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE FOUR SENSING STATIONS

EXCEPT AS, IN A MEASURE, HOSTAGES TO THE SUCCESS OF THE WITHDRAWAL. OF COURSE, IT WILL BE ARGUED THAT THE NUMBERS ARE SMALL--ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 100 TO 200 PERSONNEL-- AND THAT IN ANY EVENT THESE "VOLUNTEERS" COULD BE SPEEDILY WITHDRAWN IN THE EVENT OF TROUBLE. BUT IF THE ISRAELIS REALLY EXPECTED THAT DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND UNCERTAINTY, THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE RELUCTANT TO SURRENDER THE STRATEGIC POSITIONS THEY ARE PREPARING TO YIELD TO EGYPTIAN REPOSSESSION.

10. WE TRUST, IN ANY CASE, THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS CAUTIONED BOTH PARTIES THAT THE MONITORING ARRANGEMENT MAY BECOME FUEL FOR DEBATE, EVEN DEMAGOGUERY, BEFORE CONGRESS AGREES TO IT. AND WE TRUST THAT DR. KISSINGER IS READY TO EXPLAIN, TO THE SATISFACTION OF SKITTISH SKEPTICS, WHY THE POSTING OF AMERICANS IN THE MIDEAST POSES NO DANGER OF A SUBTLE "COMMITMENT" TO BE REPENTED IN ANGUISH.

11. IN THE DEBATE THAT SEEMS TO BE BREWING UP, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN VOLUNTEER SENTINELS AND TECHNICIANS, ON THE ONE HAND, AND HOSTAGES TO THE UNSTABLE SHIFTS OF FORTUNE IN THE MIDEAST ON THE OTHER, WILL NEED TO BE CONVINCINGLY EXPLAINED. OTHERWISE, THE SECRETARY'S LATEST EFFORT AS AN HONEST BROKER MAY COLLAPSE ON THE HOME FRONT. (END TEXT)
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